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Owner Of Gold King Mine In ‘Disbelief’ At Spill Caused By EPA

Denver CBS 4

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DENVER (CBS4) – Three million gallons of contaminated waste poured into the Animas River from the Gold King Mine when the Environmental Protection Agency accidentally breached a dam.

The owner of the mine spoke exclusively with CBS4 about the toxic disaster.

Todd Hennis said he wanted to keep the EPA out of his mine, but got fined until he let them in. Four years later, toxic water came gushing out of Gold King and into the Animas River.

“I stood before this portal July 13 and could not tell that there was a huge quantity of water backed up behind it,” said Hennis.

What happened last week was not expected even by the Gold King Mine’s owner.

“Disbelief. Just utter devastation. A little bit of incomprehension when I first saw the pictures last Thursday,” Hennis said.

He claims the water did not originate with the Gold King, but seeped into it from an adjacent mine, the Sunnyside. Its owners deny any responsibility.

Hennis did not want to give the EPA access to investigate the leakage from his mine, but said the organization fined him daily.

“When you are a small guy and you’re having a \$35,000 a day fine against you, have to throw up the white flag,” he said.

When the EPA opened it up, millions of gallons of waste were projected from inside, affecting the Animas River and all who benefit from it.

“My heart goes out to them Rick, because I’ve operated a tourist business in Silverton. It’s a short season, 100 days at best,” Hennis said.

He is coming forward to say this could have been avoided if the EPA and adjacent mine had acted on his requests.

“I had initial hesitation in going public with this, with visions of mobs, pitchforks and torches,” Hennis said.

But now he is grateful that the EPA has taken full responsibility for this environmental nightmare.

Hennis cautions that if this spill seems bad, there are other mines nearby that could be a thousand times worse when one of them has a blowout.